

**NERO EEODAC
MINUTES
Oct. 4, 2000**

The NERO Equal Employment Opportunity/Diversity Advisory Committee (EEODAC) held a conference call on October 4, 2000. The following persons were present: Sukwoo Chang, Linda Stehlik (Sandy Hook), Donna Busch (Narragansett), Sarah Babson-Pike (New Bedford), Russell Brown, Kevin Chu, Heather Fletcher, Dvora Hart, Lisa Hendrickson, Ambrose Jearld, George Liles, Dan O'Brien, Janeen Quintal, Pie Smith (Woods Hole), Nick Anderson and Cynthia Matteus (Gloucester).

The Chairman announced that Mel Howarth had resigned from the Committee, and that Christopher Martin had been appointed to the Committee to replace Paul Clark, whose term was expiring.

The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Status reports:
 - A. Minutes of last meeting
 - B. Administration Sub-committee
 - C. Personnel Sub-committee
 - D. Policy Sub-committee
 - E. Program sub-committee
2. Report of Regional Board Meeting
3. Diversity Initiatives
4. Selection of November topic for discussion
5. Additional activities to support NOAA diversity initiatives (Hispanic, Black History Months)
6. Organizational matters
 - Replacement of members (suggestions?)
7. Other Business

1. Status Reports

Minutes of the last meeting: The Committee adopted the minutes of the September meeting with no changes.

The **Administration Sub-committee** raised the question of the EEODAC website. Quintal suggested that the web site be the main topic of the November conference call. This was agreed.

Action Item: To prepare for an in-depth discussion of the web site, the persons involved with the web site will update it during this month.

Action Item: EEODAC members should look at the web site just before the November conference call and be prepared to offer suggestions on how to improve it.

Action Item: Quintal will find out more information about the review process of getting approval to post items on the web site.

Action Item: Liles will draft a policy for how to get approval for posting items to the EEODAC web site.

The **Personnel Sub-committee** is making progress on developing a checklist for supervisors to use when hiring.

Action Item: Smith will review the list with Boreman and Chu.

Smith noted that there had been a call to the Woods Hole lab for persons interested in serving on a “Welcome Wagon” committee. She suggested that people in other labs might want to volunteer or take initiative to start a similar welcome process. Interested persons should contact their supervisors and the officer in charge.

The **Policy Sub-committee** expressed an interest in working with the Personnel Sub-committee on developing the checklist for supervisors.

There was considerable discussion of how the RO might be able to compile statistics on promotions and other personnel actions, so that its information on EEO, Affirmative Action and managing diversity is comparable in quality to the Center’s. Jon Rittgers has committed to improving the RO statistics on EEO and diversity, if possible. Committee members welcomed this commitment, but were unsure how to identify the ethnicity of RO staff. Some felt that this might be confidential information, while others felt that this should be on file at the NOAA Office of Civil Rights or at EASC.

Action Item: Chu will set up a conference call with Jon Rittgers, Smith, Anderson, and Hendrickson to discuss ways to improve the RO statistics on EEO and diversity.

Action Item: Hendrickson will check with the NOAA Office of Civil Rights to see if designations of ethnicity exist and if they are available for our use.

The **Program Sub-committee** presented the Committee with its draft workplan for outreach. Chu expressed two concerns about the workplan. First, it contained a suggestion that people might have to use their own time to do outreach. Chu believed that people should not feel expected to do any activity on behalf of NOAA if NOAA was not willing to credit them for the time. Second, the workplan did not clearly specify what the activities would be. Fletcher clarified that the activity would be to engage in the outreach activities specified in the document.

After considerable discussion of the issue of getting credit for outreach activities, the committee agreed to recommend that the Deputy Directors should encourage outreach and that comp time or credit hours be given by the supervisor for outreach activities. The Committee also agreed to review the NERO performance of outreach activities at its November and December meetings to consider how well we do outreach that could help achieve our EEO or diversity goals and to review where we could do better.

Action Item: The Program Sub-committee agreed to continue to compile the list of outreach

activities by November. Nick Anderson agreed to provide a list of outreach activities undertaken by the RO before that date.

Action Item: Before the December meeting, the Program Sub-Committee will analyze what kinds of activities we are doing well at and where there are gaps in our outreach. It will develop suggestions for how to improve outreach in the areas where we are weak, and will compile a brief list of the expected benefits of improving outreach.

There ensued a discussion of who should be responsible for organizing outreach and other activities recommended by the Committee. The Committee understood that it had been formed as an advisory body, and that it was not responsible for conducting EEO or diversity-related activities. However, individuals may choose to engage in such activities. Concern was expressed about how well-equipped committee members would be to go out and present a quality message to the general public concerning NOAA programs and opportunities. It was suggested that members of the EEODAC ensure that their performance plan contain an element relating to their EEODAC responsibilities and that they get credit for their participation on the Committee and in other EEO/diversity-related activities.

2. Report from the Regional Board Meeting

Chu reported that the Regional Board, which met in September, had expressed appreciation for the efforts of the EEODAC over the past year.

Members of the Regional Board expressed an interest in several topics that the EEODAC might wish to discuss further. In particular, there was interest in information about contract hires. Is contracting done in a manner consistent with our EEO and diversity goals and guidelines? Are we managing our contractors appropriately? A number of EEODAC members expressed concern that contract hires may not be treated fairly, and the Committee agreed that this topic should be discussed in depth. It recommended that the Chairman inform the Deputy Directors that contract hires seemed to be an important, complex issue to be addressed.

A number of questions surfaced during the discussion of contract hires: Can we collect information about the ethnic backgrounds of contractors? How can we monitor the NERO performance in Affirmative Action and diversity of contractors. Can we set standards for working conditions for contractors? Do the companies that hire the individuals who work with NMFS have to meet federal EEO standards?

O'Brien noted that OMI will be training supervisors on how to hire and manage contractors. It might be useful for a EEODAC member to attend that training.

The Committee agreed to form a task force to discuss how to evaluate the NERO performance on contract hires.

Action Item: Dan O'Brien will schedule a meeting of the task force, which includes Hart, Jearld, Busch and Chu.

The Regional Board also asked the EEODAC to consider whether it would be valuable to sponsor a "Diversity Week", and, if so, when might be a good time. Committee members generally seemed to feel that this might be a good idea, but made it clear that the EEODAC members would not

be in a position to organize such an event. The Committee as a whole did not make any recommendations about holding a “Diversity Week”, but did advise that, if held, it should NOT be during Black History month.

3. Diversity Initiatives

This was not discussed during the meeting.

4. Selection of November topic for discussion

The Committee agreed that it would focus on developing the web site at its November meeting. It will also review progress of the Program Committee on outreach.

5. Additional activities to support NOAA diversity initiatives

(Hispanic, Black History Months) The EEODAC did not discuss this topic, although there was a related discussion about whether the EEODAC should be considered responsible for carrying out specific activities or whether it was primarily an advisory body. The general view of the EEODAC members is that its members are not trained to carry out specific activities, nor have their supervisors allowed enough time to carry out additional activities. The primary function of the EEODAC should be advisory, although its members may wish to volunteer for additional activities.

6. Organizational matters

The Committee considered the best way to solicit new members. The terms of half of the Committee will end in December. The Committee agreed that the Deputy Directors should contact supervisors and ask for volunteers.

Action Item: Chu should remind Boreman and Rittgers that the EEODAC terms are expiring.

7. Other Business

Liles provided a summary of his analysis of the fairness in promotions in the NEC. His overall conclusion is that with regard to promotions, the system seems to be fair, although there are so few minorities working in the Center that his conclusions cannot be considered statistically valid. There tend to be more females in lower grades and more males in upper grades, but the promotion potential is not affected by gender.

Several members of the Committee had suggestions about ways to improve the analyses and how to interpret the data. The Committee agreed that it would like to consider these figures further.

Action Item: Liles will consult with Hart on his analysis, then will send his analysis to the Committee. Committee members will review the analysis and be prepared to discuss them in November

The Chairman asked the Sub-committee chairs to send him the most recent drafts of their workplans, as he has been too disorganized to keep track of the plans sent to him earlier.

The EEODAC agreed that its next meeting would be on November 8, not on the first Wednesday of November.